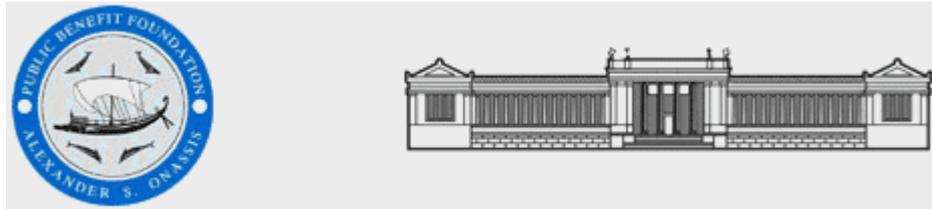


New York, USA. "Athens-Sparta: from the 8th to the 5th Centuries B.C." – Exhibition

08/11/2006



The Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation in collaboration with
The National Archaeological Museum presents the exhibition

“ATHENS – SPARTA: from the 8th to the 5th Centuries B.C.”

*Athens-Sparta Includes Ancient Ivory, Bronze and Stone Sculptures,
Pottery and Other Rare Artifacts*

New exhibition brings Laconic and Attic artifacts
to the U.S. for the first time



Statue of a Hoplite known as "Leonidas." 480-470 B.C.

Parian marble. Found southwest of peribolos of the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos on the Acropolis of Sparta. Archaeological Museum, Sparta, 3365

New York, NY, November 8, 2006—*Athens-Sparta*, an exhibition of rare archaeological artifacts and works of art from Athens and Sparta, Greece, will open at the Onassis Cultural Center in New York City on December 6, 2006. Highlights of the exhibition include treasures such as a marble statue of a hoplite, known as “Leonidas”, from the end of the 5th century B.C.; a marble statue of an Athenian Kore from the Acropolis Museum, from the 5th century B.C.; bronze figurines of hoplites from Sparta, from the 8th to the 6th centuries B.C.; a ceramic kylix by the Arkesilas Painter from the 6th century B.C.; a marble statuette of Athena from the mid-4th century B.C.; Attic marble reliefs and grave stele from the late 5th century B.C.; and arrowheads and spearheads from Thermopylae, the famous 5th century battlefield. The 289 exquisite artifacts in the exhibition, many of which are traveling abroad for the first time, will be on view at the Onassis Cultural Center in New York through May 12, 2007.

Athens-Sparta consists of three sections representing the cultural development of the two most important city-states in ancient Greece, along with an introduction that focuses on the two cities’

formations. The first section explores their artistic, social, and cultural developments from the Late Geometric period through the Archaic period (8th to the 5th centuries B.C.), including metal work, pottery, and public monuments. While Sparta was not making the same strides in monumental structures as Athens during this period, it did flourish in other areas including metal work, ivory sculpture, and pottery.

In the first half of the 6th century B.C., Sparta was one of the most important centers for artistic production, particularly for bronze works, as shown in such rare pieces as the hoplite figurines, a black-figure hydria depicting riders and warriors, from 555-550 B.C., a relief votive stele representing an enthroned couple, from 550-525 B.C., and a group of ivory figurines from the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia from 700-650 B.C.

The two other sections in *Athens-Sparta* represent the artistic development during the 5th century B.C., in the broader context of the continuously changing dynamics between the two cities, during the Persian Wars (500 B.C. to 449 B.C.) and the Peloponnesian War (431 B.C. to 404 B.C.). These momentous events greatly influenced each city-state’s culture and artistic development, as represented through the magnificent artifacts in the exhibition, including an Attic black-figure lekythos from 500-490 B.C., a bronze statuette of an athlete from about 500 B.C., and a Nike figurine from the late 6th century B.C.

In the 5th century B.C., Attic art made advances in the areas of sculpture and pottery which led to the popularization of these art forms, examples of which include a votive relief with the Delian Trinity and a helmeted head of Athena from the late 5th century B.C., and the silver Tetradrachm of Athens from 450-404 B.C. In contrast, there is a remarkable scarcity of excavated Laconic artifacts from this period, with scant metal work pieces and little evidence of advancements in Laconian pottery. The archaeological evidence of Laconic monumental stone sculpture from the Classical period is also considerably less than that of the Archaic period. *Athens-Sparta* features a rare example of stone sculpture from this period: a statue of a hoplite, known as “Leonidas”, from 480-470 B.C., one of the most widely studied artifacts in the exhibition. The statue depicts a running hoplite (a heavily armored foot soldier), known as the Spartan king Leonidas, who led a small force of soldiers against the much larger Persian army in Thermopylae in 480 B.C., during the Persian Wars. Leonidas and all of the soldiers died in the battle, becoming a symbol of the Spartan willingness to sacrifice oneself for the greater good of society.

Athens-Sparta balances out contemporary perspectives on the uneven cultural relationship between the two ancient city-states, in which Attic art has traditionally been recognized as the more advanced of the two. This higher regard for Attic art can be understood in the broader context of Attic culture as a whole, perceived as more refined and expressive than its rival neighbor. In contrast, Laconic culture – and by extension Laconic art – is generally considered austere and conservative. By bringing together such a vast selection of important artifacts from each city-state, *Athens-Sparta* challenges these perceptions, bringing to light the refinements of Laconic art and culture. This exhibition highlights the accomplishments of Spartan artists and gives viewers the chance to find a depth and complexity in Laconic art that is normally overshadowed by that of Athens. Shedding light on Laconic art’s refinements, *Athens-Sparta* features such exquisite artifacts as a bronze figurine from 525-500 B.C., of a young female runner in mid-stride, with an expressive face, long flowing hair, and graceful athletic body; a rare clay Laconian kylix from 560 B.C., which depicts the iconographic theme of the wealthy king Arkesilas from Cyrene overseeing the weighing and bundling of an ancient and valuable medicinal plant; and a kylix from 560-550 B.C., one of the earliest to portray the myth of Atlas and his brother Prometheus’ suffering eternally under Zeus’ punishments. Through such artifacts visitors are given the rare opportunity to examine the differences between the distinct philosophical, political, and cultural ways of life of the two Hellenic city-states, aspects of which continue to resonate in culture and human behavior in the present.



Statuette of an Athlete. ca. 550 B.C. Bronze. Attic workshop. Found on Acropolis of Athens, 1888. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, 6445

This exhibition includes loans from the Acropolis Museum, Epigraphical Museum, Kerameikos Archaeological Museum, National Archaeological Museum, the Numismatic Museum, 3rd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, the Archaeological Museum in Marathon, the Archaeological Museum in Olympia, the Archaeological Museum in Rhodes, and the Archaeological Museum in Sparta, all located in Greece. *Athens-Sparta* will also include pieces from the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris; the Vatican Museums, Vatican City; the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; and the American Numismatic Society, in New York.

Contributors to the exhibition catalogue include, in addition to the curator, Dr. Donald Kagan, Sterling Professor of History and Classics at Yale University, Dr. Paul Cartledge, Professor of Greek History, Chairman of the Faculty of Classics, and a Fellow of Clare College, at the University of Cambridge, as well as eminent Greek historians and archaeologists like Georgia Kokkorou Alevras, Professor of Classical Archaeology at University of Athens, Dr. Yanis Pikoulas, Professor at University of Thessaly (IAKA), Editor of *Horos*, Dr. Yannis Touratsoglou, Emeritus Director of the Numismatic Museum and of the National Archaeological Museum, and Ismini Trianti, Professor of Classical Archaeology at University of Ioannina.

Athens-Sparta is curated by Dr. Nikos Kaltsas, Director of the National Archaeological Museum.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Onassis Cultural Center will organize an international scholarly conference, a lecture program in New York, as well as dramatic readings of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and Aeschylus' *The Persians* in various venues.

Onassis Cultural Center

The Onassis Cultural Center is the public forum of the Onassis Foundation (USA), an Affiliate of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation founded by Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis upon his death in 1975. The Onassis Foundation (USA) aims to disseminate Greek culture and civilization of all time periods in the United States of America. The Center seeks to give the public greater access to significant aspects of Greek culture through its ongoing series of exhibitions, lectures, musical events, literary evenings, and theatrical performances.

To learn more about the Foundation and the Onassis Cultural Center, please visit www.onassisusa.org. The Onassis Cultural Center, which is located in the Olympic Tower (645 Fifth Avenue – entrance on 51st and 52nd Streets) is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and admission is free.